



Ag Education as a Profession



The Agriculture Teacher as a Leader

Are agriculture teachers' leaders? Sure, we develop leadership in our students and we believe in the power of an agricultural education program to develop people, schools and communities, but are agriculture teachers leaders? We believe that the good ones certainly are leaders!

If you believe the definition of leadership presented by John Maxwell, that leadership is influence, it would be hard to describe effective agriculture teachers as anything but leaders! Let's explore the "teacher as leader" idea in light of a two additional leadership authors and examine ways for teachers to increase their influence on students, school, and community.

Franklin Covey, in his book, "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" outlines seven habits we can work on to be a more effective person and leader. These habits are positive contributors to agriculture teacher leadership!

1. **Be proactive** – Having a vision for yourself, your program, and even your community will place you in a unique leadership light. Taking responsible for your actions will set you apart from many irresponsible people. *The agriculture teacher leader has a plan for their career, their chapter, and their agricultural education program.*
2. **Begin with the end in mind** – Knowing your destination as a person, teacher, family member, etc. keeps you in control of your life and your accomplishments. *The teacher-leader has a destination in mind.*
3. **Put first things first** – Prioritizing your life will lead to greater accomplishments and a sense of achievement when the great things are completed. *The exceptional teacher-leader knows what is important and makes accomplishing the important things top a priority.*
4. **Think, WIN-WIN** – People will see you as a great cooperater if you practice an abundance mentality (there are plenty of good things out there for everyone) and look for ways to solve conflicts in a way that provides mutual benefit. *Teacher-leaders who seek mutual benefits and enjoy the accomplishments of others are seen as cooperative.*
5. **Seek first to understand then to be understood** – Listen to others first. Understand where they are coming from, what they want, and what they need. You will be in a better position to ask for your needs if you understand others first. *Teacher-leaders listen to others and know what is important to them.*
6. **Synergize** – Work together to accomplish great goals. Does it really matter who had the initial idea when everyone benefits? *Great teacher-leaders are team builders and collaborators.*
7. **Sharpen the saw** – Take time to recharge and rest, you cannot operate at top speed indefinitely. *Teacher-leaders who take the time to rest and recharge are effective for the long term.*

In their book, "The Leadership Challenge" (need first names) Posner and Kouzes describe five characteristics of effective leaders that apply directly to effective agriculture teacher leaders. .

- Challenging the process – Teacher-leaders who challenge the process are constantly looking for better ways to teach, advise, change the system for the better, innovate, and improve. They are willing to take risks to make substantial improvements.
- Inspiring a shared vision – Visionary teacher-leaders have a plan for success. They envision an uplifting and ennobling future. They are able to involve the students, advisory committee, administration, the community, and other teachers in a shared vision of the program.
- Enabling others to act – Great agriculture teacher-leaders are enablers of others. They prepare others for action while providing materials and training necessary to perform. They strengthen students by giving them power and responsibility. They also foster collaboration and trust in the members and community.
- Modeling the way – Being a role model for others is a central trait of the effective teacher-leader. Setting the example, using good judgment, and promoting the success of others are typical behaviors of a modeling leader.
- Encouraging the heart – Agriculture teacher-leaders who encourage the heart recognize students and adults for their contribution to the programs success. They celebrate accomplishments and overtly recognize those who contribute.